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ABSTRACT

Dichotomies that must be addressed if U.S schools are to succeed in globalizing studies and perspectives are examined and an alternative learning model is presented. The dichotomies are (1) teacher-centered vs. student-centered learning, (2) subject-centered vs. problem-centered learning, (3) disciplinary vs. interdisciplinary learning, (4) cognitive vs. affective learning, (5) time-sequenced dissemination vs. development learning, (6) situational vs. societal needs, and (7) vocational training vs. liberal education. The model for education, 1984-2000, substitutes learning centers for schools. There will be four types of centers: priority centers--from birth to age eight, community centers--replacing the high school, national centers, and global centers. The latter two will replace the college and university. Emphasis will be on analyzing problems at the community, national, and global levels; an interdisciplinary approach will be used. Television and computer networks will be used to transmit information to students. Educators will serve as change agents through the facilitation of problem-solving groups and will produce most of the information for the media. (RM)

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"GLOBAL EDUCATION IN AMERICA: ITS FAILURES AND FUTURES"

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1984

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Introduction: America's Egocentism

America is blessed with great wealth, seemingly unlimited resources, and one of the world's highest standards of living--no matter how one chooses to measure it. This "land of opportunity" has also had many new possibilities to offer its citizens in its relatively young history. Most of America's efforts, frustrations and achievements have been rewarded, and with few exceptions, encouraged further enterprise. Frederick Jackson Turner believed that America was so naively egoistic through the nineteenth century because there were always new frontiers to conquer. A global perspective is foreign to Americans even today. America really didn't emerge as a world power until the 20th century, and many historians would concur that there was great reluctance to enter "foreign entanglements" even then.

For the first time in American history, educators now claim our children are less educated than their parents. The nation is "at risk" of losing its underpinnings--having an educated populace capable of making intelligent choices. Criticism again abounds at all educational levels, and the possibility of dwindling financial support, competition from outside agencies, and questions of legitimacy continue to threaten current educational practices. State legislatures, teacher accrediting agencies, school boards and colleges of education continue to look inwardly for answers to questions pertaining

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to "Johnny's" inability to read, write, spell, calculate, and maintain traditional standards of behavior.

Added to this malaise in educational circles is the growing awareness that an egocentric perspective of global peoblems is untenable. Although futurists have intensified some awareness of this perspective, the second and third worlds have been more responsive than first world nations to the need for shared contingency planning and educational orientation to global problem-solving.

Examples of American naivete about global issues include such incidents as the 1973 oil embargo, the Iranian fiasco, Salvadorian and Nicaraguan politics and more recently the events in Lebanon. Theats of invading Saudi Arabia to get "our" oil, dropping a nuclear weapon on Qom, sending troops into Central America, and letting the Lebanese fight it out among themselves are only a few examples of the cavalier attitudes expressed by the American public. It is in light of these and many more incidents that the need for global perspectives in education are tantamount to survival. The authors of this essay suggest a more pressing "basic" in education--a fourth "R" summarized as a reorientation to a global perspective.

Part of the reason why American schools have failed dismally in efforts to "globalize" studies and perspectives can be attributed to the structure of the institution itself. Not only is education geared to meet industrial era needs, but industrial era values, priorities and goals are perpetual in a post-industrial, communication era. New models and mindsets are needed, if we in education are going to make a difference.[1] The following sections suggest some of the dichotomies that must be addressed and what an alternative learning model may look like.

Toward Global Education

There is little doubt that the "globalization" of education has become an increasingly popular concept in educational literature in recent years. Although the concept is popular, there is, however, little consensus pursuant to the need or the implementation of this "global" education. For example, many of us think that we know how to hammer a nail into a board. We may believe this until we miss the nail, bend the nail, lose the nail, injure a thumb, or kick the dog. In spite of certain implementation problems, we may still know how to hammer a nail without knowing how to build a house. But many Americans now live in houses built with electric or gas-driven staple-guns, having walls that will not hold any nails (which reduces the need for hammer, pictures, and things to hand on nails). Although this is a simplified analogy, a large number of non-Americans will differ in their interpretation of our needs/implementations and the relation of this process to their processes. Differences of opinion can be better understood by reducing the confusion in American education. We need to resolve the dichotomies that hamper prospects for global education. The following includes a list of substantive dichotomies and suggestions for resolving these differences.

1. Teacher-Centered vs. Student-Centered Learning. The "best" learning environment is still perceived by many educators to be a teacher-centered learning approach. Here, the teacher is the responsible "director"/"head-filler" with students having some involvement in shaping the goals and/or methods of learning. This approach presupposes a clear need for the teacher to establish a common curriculum which is to be mastered by all students. Even present-day notions of how to use new educational technologies

are oriented toward transmissive modes. We the authors suggest that a teacher/student-centered approach may be more apropos. Teacher-centered approaches very often espouse only one view of the world. Global awareness includes alternative thinking opportunities. Knowledge held in common by all participants is critical to the facilitation of equal opportunity, but there is also a need for individualizing and collectivising the learning environment. Students should be expected to plan and execute individual and group studies. This enhances self-motivation and self-reliance as well as creating a participatory social contract where all participants assume responsibility for learning.

2. Subject-Centered vs. Problem-Centered Learning. This dichotomy often relates to time. It is usually more time-efficient to teach subjects with less emphasis upon problems related to the subjects. We in education will always be concerned with time-related issues. Some subjects, though, appear to be more conducive to problem-centered experiences. The dichotomy also asks us whether students should begin with a problem and proceed to a subject or vice-versa. It seems most appropriate for us to integrate both approaches into the system. Both efficiency of time and efficiency in the practice of problem-solving are necessary to the development of critical problem-solving skills. A problem-centered approach is critical, however, to a global perspective. One cannot hope to be globally oriented if subject-centered were used alone.

3. Interdisciplinary vs. Disciplinary Learning. Disciplinary learning makes sequential, systematic processes easier to operationalize and monitor. Interdisciplinary learning facilitates problem-solving which is not confined to particular subjects. A study of population growth, for example, includes such subjects as history, sociology, math, science, and economics. There is a need for both types of learning if people are to understand the interrelatedness and interdependency we as humans require for survival.

4. Cognitive vs. Affective Learning. There is a need to establish concise cognitive skills (which can be measured). Reading, writing, mathematics, and computer skills can be measured and they are examples of necessary prerequisites for an educated society. But, it is also necessary to provide affective education pursuant to self-esteem, self-confidence and moral conscience. It is appropriate to teach social skills (sharing, cooperation, and trust) which shape appropriate interpersonal skills. Stress and anxiety in this rapidly changing world should also be addressed in the educational experience.

5. Time-Sequenced Dissemination vs. Development Learning. This is an unfortunate dichotomy in American schools. More research needs to be accomplished in the area of developmental readiness. Too much learning is age-specific (six-year-olds attend first grade) when it should first be developmentally specific. Time-sequencing can then be more easily achieved as students near the same developmental stages are working together. Sequencing, however, should not be as rigid as it has been in the past. All problems or subjects should not occupy equal time

in the curriculum. Problems on a global scale require formal levels of cognitive development and a lot of time to nurture. For that reason, it is imperative that children learn at times with children having higher levels of cognitive development.

6. Situational vs. Societal Needs. Societal priorities are important in this malaise-ridden country. There is a real need for students in Missoula, Montana to have common knowledge (developmentally) and some notion of the social values equivalent to students in Houston, Texas. There are also important unique needs which should be satisfied in accordance with the situational needs of each community. This must be encouraged not only at the state or community level, but also within the different classes of each school. What must be understood and encouraged in American schools is the idea that what is good for America does not have to be at the expense of everybody else.

7. Vocational Training vs. Liberal Education. In this information-era, the need for a liberal education is critical to the goals of a democratic society. But the educators' primary task is to teach students how to think not only with "perennial" logic but also with futures problem-solving skills. There is also a place for vocational training in public schools, but oriented toward extracurricular studies rather than the major thrust of education. There must be a separation between training and education. Evening and weekend training in vocational studies would make use of school facilities more cost effective and provide

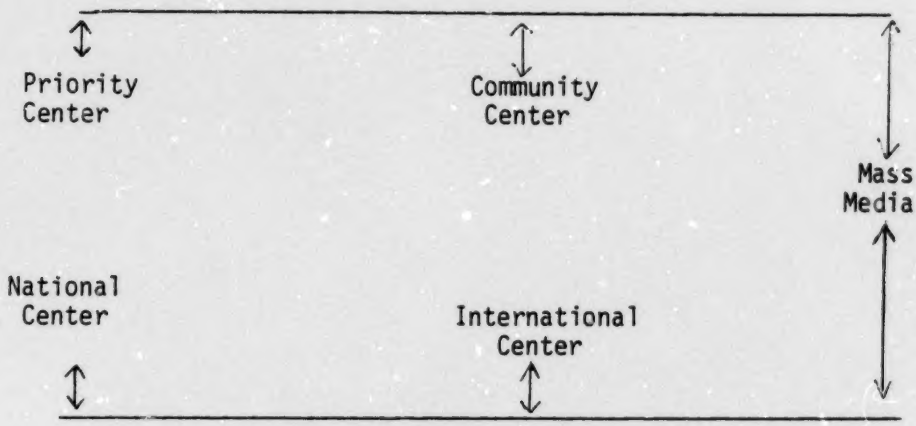
useful activities for young and old who wish to learn new skills. If there was ever a time this country needed education, rather than a "learning for earning" mindset it is now. Global understanding reflects the need for education and not training.

Education In A World Without Borders

As we try to resolve the dichotomies in the previous section, it will hopefully become easier to perceive education in a "world without borders" perspective. In the past, governments (nation-states) dominated international understanding. Recently, however, multinational corporations (MNC's) have become as powerful and, in some cases, more powerful than nation-states in international relations. The time has come for education to also become international. Not only could education monitor business and government, it also could reduce the "rear-view mirror" or past-oriented approach (which has contributed to intellectual obsolescence in school and society). It is not unreasonable to expect that students of all ages will soon be communicating daily via satellite and other tele-linkups with students in other countries. If we as futurists can devote some time for this to become a reality, there may be renewed hope for the avoidance of such egocentric realities as megafamines and nuclear war. Global communication in education will help resolve the present adversarial system. Nationalism (which Einstein once called the measles of mankind) could be put in proper perspective as fifth graders in Kansas City communicate each day with friends and fellow learners in Japan, China or India. We have underestimated and not planned for even the possibility of the profound impact of global education on the

on the future of all people. The following model substitutes learning centers for schools. We believe that it facilitates the proposals given previously.

A Model For Education, 1984-2000: Problem Analysis-Futures Planning Centers



Priority Center. This will be a center for early childhood learning experiences from birth to approximately age eight. It is the only center that will be age-segregated. Parents will, however, be required to attend seminars on early education as well as observe videotapes on their child's progress. Certain mandatory hours for parental participation will be conducted during the twenty-four hour day to conform with different parental tasks or work obligations. Early childhood education will be as important as college was during industrial-era times. After sufficient preparation in basics (which may or may not be reading, writing and mathematics), individuals may choose to attend community, national and global centers.

Community Center. This center will provide environments for analysis of community problems and the development of alternatives for the future. Age segregation will occur through the use of developmental stage theory and interests of the participants. The community center will replace the high school. It will be attended by individuals of all ages and it will be the most important avenue for lifelong education.

National Center. Problems and future alternatives pursuant to national decision-making will be addressed at this center. It will be cross-generational and segregated only by the interests and goals of the participants. This center and the global center will replace the college and university of the industrial-era.

Global Center. Participants at this center will analyze global problems and develop future alternatives. Emphasis will be placed upon interdisciplinary systems planning.[2]

All of these centers have common characteristics. They would be attended on a voluntary basis (except for parents who have volunteered their children for education in priority centers). Participants will be given credit for the completion of objectives which they have chosen to complete. Transcripts will include only objectives that have been completed. For example, items on a computerized community center might include:

110. Tenth level reading set.
111. Ten-block survey on employment satisfaction in Alvin, Texas.
112. Proposal statement on energy alternatives for low-income housing in center community.
113. Group analysis on theories on Systematic Desensitization.

Studies will not be time-sequenced as the amount of time allocated to objectives will depend upon the goals of the unique groups or individuals. Some objectives will continue for years while others may last for a few days. Although the above example of a transcript is general items of particular interest it could also be made available to elaborate upon particular learning objectives. The centers would be open at all hours for participants of all ages. Problems are interdisciplinary and multiple curriculum alternatives are needed. Although the Centers will be directed toward the facilitation of analysis and planning, they will also be integrally involved in dissimination of information which was the prominent characteristic of education during the industrial-era. Every area of study necessitates the use of historical precedent. One does not become an inventor, scientist, or medical technician without a history (pre-requisites in language, chemistry, et cetera) of generally acknowledged facts.

Because of cheaper cost, it is reasonable to assume that the transmission of information will occur through the use of closed-circuit or public television, and computer networks. Lectures on every level and in every field will be taped and made available to all interested individuals. There is ample technology to make some 1000 television program options available at any given time. Sesame Street is perhaps only the beginning of a revolution at all stages of learning. Our youngest futurists are learning that education can be exciting and rewarding.

Teachers will become facilitators of Problem Analysis/Futures Centers. They will also produce most of the information for the media. Discipline-problems, like yellow buses, will disappear. The babysitting role of educational institutions will disappear. The "school" as we know it, will

disappear. The possibility of global awareness will be a reality as more educational technologies make it possible to "wear" the sandals of fellow learners ten-thousand miles away.

In the Problem Analyis/Futures Planning Centers, educators will serve as change-agents through the facilitation of problem-solving groups. Educators will also be script writers and producers for the media. The historian, for example, will still tape lectures, but another important aspect of his work may be his historical contribution to television, radio and other media. Authentic history could have improved shows in the 1970's such as "The Waltons" or "Happy Days". These programs could have been enjoyable, much more educational and more realistic if more time were spent on other motives than just entertainment.

Industrial-era schools relied upon a passive teaching methodology and external rewards. Students were taught to accumulate Carnegie units of credit which resulted in the division of the school day into fifty minute sessions. In contrast, the centers model offers highly flexible options designed to maximize the interest and participation of learners. Content is more significant than methods or techniques of teaching when students are actively involved in planning and conducting their education environment. Much can be learned in a short time when studies are personally interesting and challenging.

Whenever students are interested and actively involved in learning, the teaching methodology is less significant than the content. With few exceptions in American schools, this has been confined to Kindergarten pupils and some graduate students.

The evolution from industrial-era schools to post-industrial/communications-era centers is possible. It will not be an easy transition because it

invokes multiple changes from psychology to organizational structure in society, as well as the educational system. An overriding reason why we the authors think it must be more than a possibility is, however, the need for a global perspective in problem-solving. The alternative is a world we don't want and didn't plan for.

Notes

1. See also, J. Pulliam, "Educational Priorities for the Not-So-Gay 90's" in Kierstead, et. al, The Future in Education: Problems, Possibilities and Promise. Special Topics Edition, Journal of Thought, vol 16, Nr. 3, Fall, 1981.

2. See also Bowman, et.al, The Far Side of the Future: Social Problems and Educational Reconstruction. (Washington D.C.: Education Section, WFS), 1978, Part II.